

Australia enhancing engagement, influence, and defence capability on a budget

: How embedding defence personnel supported national strategy during the Gillard Government

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Introduction

One of the best ways that regional engagement can achieve its objectives is through activities that enhance personal relationships between members of the Australian Defence organisation and those of regional defence organisations. There are two ways this can be achieved. The first is through what we do overseas and the second is through providing opportunities for overseas defence personnel to undergo training and education in Australia.¹

This paper considers the question of how the practice of embedding defence personnel in bilateral engagement programs has supported Australian national strategy. It focuses on embedding activities that were undertaken by Australia during the Gillard Government, noting that this administration experienced intense fiscal pressure and coincided with the United States (US) ‘pivot to the Asia-Pacific’. ‘Embedding’ is a concept that is very familiar to defence personnel and is considered a key engagement mechanism between militaries, and yet there is almost no academic discussion considering the use or value of this practice. Consequently this paper seeks to enhance the understanding of the use of embedding defence personnel and endeavours to emphasize how the practice has contributed towards supporting national strategy.

The examination of embedding activities was grouped into three case studies, each selected as they highlight different examples of the

¹ Bergin, A., Bateman, S. and Channer, H., “Terms of engagement: Australia’s regional defence diplomacy,” *ASPI Strategy*, July 2013, p. 76, www.aspi.org.au/report/terms-engagement-australias-regional-defence-diplomacy, accessed November 5, 2018.

embedding programs and relationships engaged in by Australia. The first case study considers Australia's longstanding relationship with the US including the government's decision to support the Force Posture Initiatives (FPI). The second case study considers the Australian Defence Force's (ADF's) direct engagement within the South Pacific through activities such as the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) funded Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP), and the third case study examines the use of Australian-based postgraduate academic training engagement, also funded through the DCP.

The Gillard Government ran for three years from 24 June 2010 until 26 June 2013. During this period economic stresses remained after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and Australian defence spending was at its lowest since the end of the Cold War. Major power changes were emerging within the Asia-Pacific region, influenced by the rapid economic and military rise of China, accompanied by concerns that the US could be losing its position of strategic primacy within the region. Australia has a longstanding history with the US as their greatest security ally, and more recently through resource exports, China's and Australia's economies have become increasingly entwined, leading to somewhat of a security dilemma in balancing Australia's relationship with both states and a perceived strategic hedging requirement to increase overall regional engagement.

This paper proposes that the period during the Gillard Government administration could be considered an inflection point for Australian regional engagement strategy, and that endorsement of defence embedding activities, made a valuable contribution towards supporting the Gillard Government's 2013 *National Security Strategy's* key priority of enhanced regional engagement. To appreciate the Gillard Government's situation, trends in defence expenditure and bilateral engagement during and prior to the administration were mapped by reviewing annual defence reports. In order to assess the impact of embedding, several instances of bilateral engagement were identified which involved the direct interaction of defence personnel such as for training, education, combined exercises or postings.

Defining ‘embedding’ and analysis of previous research

Prior to the case studies, consideration is given to existing research relevant to embedding and Australian national strategy associated with regional engagement. Although bilateral defence relationships involving direct or face-to-face engagement are a key tool used to support strategic priorities, there is virtually no academic discussion as to the value obtained by bilaterally ‘embedding’ defence force members and equipment.

The ADF is familiar with the term ‘embedding’ having several formalized agreements that include foreign personnel serving within Australian forces and vice versa in both training and operational roles, and a significant proportion of the defence budget supports engagement programs. What is uncommon, is the use of the term ‘embedding’ within academic discussion related to defence. There is peer-reviewed material considering the impact of embedding journalists within military forces, however this author found no academic discussion addressing the embedding of defence personnel within foreign forces.² Defence related definitions were also challenging to locate: in 2017, US media used ‘embedding’ to imply working directly with foreign forces,³ and in 2015 the British press clarified ‘embedding’ as a program of agreements “where the embedded personnel operate under the mandate or command and control of the foreign force they are within, but also remain subject to the law, policy and military jurisdiction of their own country”.⁴ Within this paper, examples conforming to both of these descriptions are used.

Academic discussion does consider how Australian defence policy has supported national strategic interests, which is useful when

² An example of academic discussion regarding the embedding of journalists within military units: Pfau, M., Haigh, M., Gettle, M. and Donnelly, M., “Embedding journalists in military combat units: impact on newspaper story frames and tone,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 1, 2004, pp. 74-88.

³ McLeary, P. & De Luce, D., “In break from Obama, Trump embedding more U.S. forces with Afghan combat units,” *Foreign Policy*, November 10, 2017, www.foreignpolicy.com/2017/11/10/in-break-from-obama-trump-embedding-more-u-s-forces-with-afghan-combat-units/.

⁴ “Syria air strikes: What are ‘embedded’ military personnel?,” *BBC News UK*, July 17, 2015, www.bbc.com/news/uk-33568054.

considering what influence the Gillard Government has had on Defence regional engagement. John Lee, an Australian international economic and security academic, claimed that while the 2000, 2009 and 2013 *Defence White Papers* have all upheld the importance of “ensuring strategic stability in the Asia-Pacific”, as a critical national security interest, their approach has been limited to “risk management” in terms of ensuring Australia has adequate military capabilities to manage adverse developments in the region, but have failed to explore and identify how Australian relationships in Southeast Asia could contribute to ensuring strategic stability in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵ Lee omits in his argument the long-term regional engagement work that Defence has had underway since the 1980s through activities such as the DCP. As recognised within Gillard’s 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century Foreign Policy White Paper*, this long-term bilateral relationship building activity that includes “training, joint exercises, specialised exchanges and shared professional perspectives on defence doctrine” bears fruit by generating opportunities to “pursue deeper strategic and security partnerships” and so further Australia’s strategic interests.⁶ The DCP is explored further within the second and third case studies.

While the Gillard Government inherited the *2009 Defence White Paper*, it can be directly credited for the 2013 release. Contrary to Lee’s assessment, prominent Australian Strategic Policy Institute authors Bergin, Bateman and Channer consider the *2013 Defence White Paper* to be full of strong statements calling to deepen defence relations with regional countries and that the document ‘pivots’ the ADF “back to closer engagement in our region”. In their assessment, the value of defence regional engagement is recognised through not only shaping a favourable security environment, but concurrently “providing an

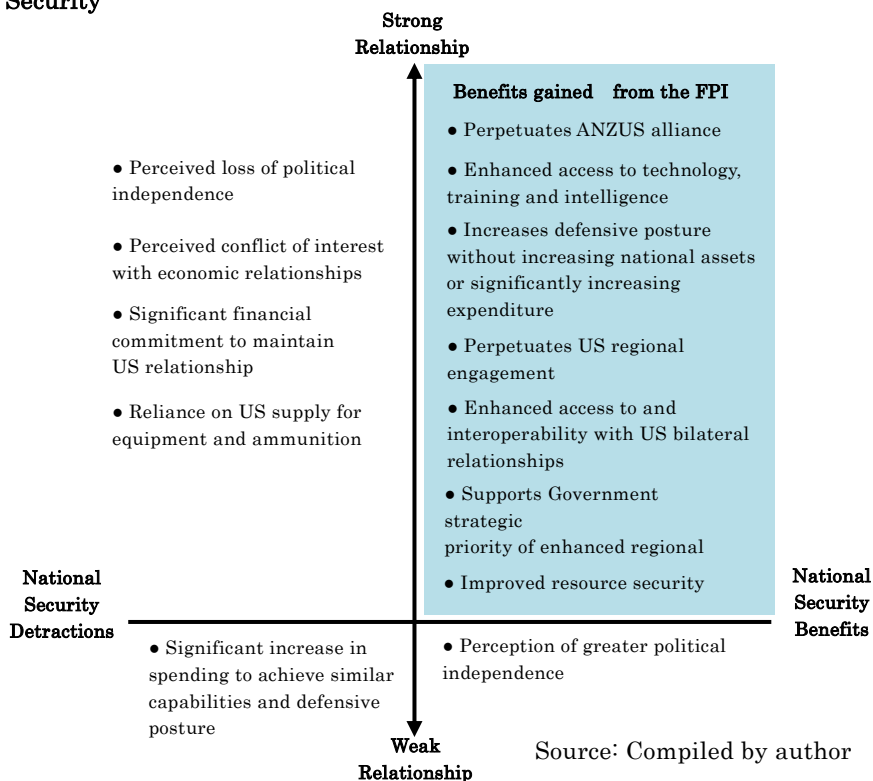
⁵ Lee, J., “Australia’s 2015 Defence White Paper: Seeking strategic opportunities in Southeast Asia to help manage China’s peaceful rise,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2013, pp. 396-397.

⁶ Priority countries for engagement include Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, India and China, as identified within Australian Government [hereafter Aust. Gov.], “Australia in the Asian century: White Paper, October 2012,” 2012, p. 230,

www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/australia_in_the_asian_century_white_paper.pdf.

effective hedge against strategic risk and future uncertainty.”⁷ The Gillard Government’s support of the FPI was just such a multi-faceted policy. Several strategic benefits were gained for Australia by the FPI and the implied strengthening of the alliance with the US, which at the same time by increasing Australia’s opportunities to engage with other regional countries aids in hedging against the possible future decline of US regional primacy. The benefits and detractions of Australia’s relationship with the US are discussed further within the first case study and are summarised below within Figure 1.

Figure 1. Benefits gained for Australia by the FPI and the impact of the defence relationship with the United States on Australian National Security



⁷ Bergin et. al., “Terms of engagement,” pp. 10-11.

Professor Michael Evans, a leading Military Studies scholar, whilst agreeing that Australia's policies recognise the growing strategic importance of engaging with the Asia-Pacific, calls for a major geopolitical shift in thinking away from an "ideology of 'great and powerful friends'" and from an historical focus on Australia's isolated geography and continental rather than maritime attributes. Whilst not condemning Australia's heritage of maritime security assured through Western great power protectors, Evans sees a need for Australia to both exploit those relationships and simultaneously reach out and engage with Asia, which places his thinking back in line with Bergin et al.'s "effective hedge" policy. Evans sees the Gillard Government's *2013 National Security Strategy* and the *2012 Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* as recognising the global shift in economic power to the Asia-Pacific region with the consequence that "the tyranny of distance was being replaced by the prospects of proximity". Evans' evidence that the Australian Government is developing an enhanced perception of the importance of the maritime domain was based on the strategic direction and force structure imperatives of the 2009, 2013 and 2016 *Defence White Papers* which he considers, since 2009 have led to projects intended to re-equip the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) for a greater maritime role as well as reconfiguring the Australian Army towards a greater amphibious approach.⁸ The FPI agreement to rotate US Marines through Darwin coupled with the delivery of the first of two Canberra class Landing Helicopter Dock (LHDs) ships in 2014 can be considered critical enablers to developing an enhanced Australian amphibious capability.

The *2009 Defence White Paper* identified four major Australian strategic interests listed in priority as a secure Australia, a secure immediate neighbourhood, strategic stability in the Asia-Pacific region and a stable, rules-based global security order. The accompanying strategic posture was stated as "a policy of self-reliance in the direct

⁸ Evans, M., "Soundings Papers: Australian rendezvous: maritime strategy and national destiny in the 21st century," *Sea Power Centre –Australia*, June 2016, pp. 1-2, www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/soundings-papers-australian-rendezvous-maritime-strategy-and-national, in which Evans quotes the Australian Government, "Australia in the Asian Century: White Paper," pp. 1, 105.

defence of Australia, as well as an ability to do more when required, consistent with our strategic interests and within the limits of our resources.”⁹ It is this author’s opinion that there was a difference in Australia’s defence priorities with the Gillard Government in that the focus shifted from the direct defence of Australia and the security of the immediate neighbourhood to a greater focus on the Asia-Pacific region’s strategic importance. This refocus was accompanied by a need to increase defensive posture without an increase in overall defence spending, cognisance of the potential future decline of US primacy, and the consequent requirement to prioritise engagement across the entire region. This finding is supported by the Gillard Government’s *2013 National Security Strategy*, which recognised that the traditional US dominance was being increasingly contested in the region, accompanied by the increasing modernisation of militaries across Asia. In response, the strategy recommended increasing military cooperation, joint exercises and diplomatic engagement with countries across Asia in order to build greater transparency, open communication, confidence and trust. Maintaining a strong Australia-US alliance as well as fostering and growing a “network of strategic relationships with neighbours and regional partners” was considered a key enabler.¹⁰

Enhanced regional engagement was identified as the first of three Government priorities for the five years following the 2013 Strategy release, recognizing that Australia’s strategic and economic future was “tied to the Asia-Pacific region.”¹¹ The Strategy stated a requirement for Australia to work actively to promote trust and cooperation, in order to maintain the relative peace and stability of recent decades. In support of this priority, specific mention is made both of the importance of the contribution made to regional security by Australia’s alliance with the US, and of the enduring interest Australia has in the security, stability and economic prosperity of the Pacific Islands region, which Australia

⁹ Australian Department of Defence [hereafter Aust. DoD], “Defence White Paper 2009,” 2009, p. 46, www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2009/.

¹⁰ Aust. Gov., “Strong and secure: a strategy for Australia’s national security,” *Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet*, 2013, p. vii, www.files.ethz.ch/isn/167267/Australia%20A%20Strategy%20for%20National%20Securit.pdf.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

contributes directly to through activities such as the DCP. In effect, the Gillard Government's national strategy was promoting increased regional engagement through activities reliant on the embedding of defence personnel.

Academic discussion to date recognises the importance of Australian defence relationships with Asian-Pacific nations towards supporting strategic stability however it does not examine the physical process of how those relationships are developed or why particular methods may be preferred. Bergin et al., come close with their support for "activities that enhance personal relationships," but did not analyse such engagement from a process perspective. Through considering the question of how the practice of embedding defence personnel supports national strategy, this paper seeks to enhance understanding of the importance of bilateral defence relationships.

1 - Case Study: Enhancing defence capability and regional engagement through embedding with the United States

Australia with the US has a long history of embedding personnel and equipment within each forces' organization. In fact, Australians and Americans first fought together under unified command one hundred years ago in France at the Battle of Hamel in July 1918 under Australian General John Monash. Monash had infantry, armour, artillery and aircraft at his disposal. Four companies of American troops (roughly 1,000 men) were attached to two Australian infantry brigades: Monash used the American troops to bolster the battle-depleted battalions, while also giving the Americans first-hand battle experience.

Lieutenant General Sir John Monash meticulously planned for the battle to last 90 minutes. It lasted 93 minutes, with all units involved in the assault taking their objectives, and the battle plans for Hamel became a model for future successes.¹²

¹² The Battle of Hamel is mentioned on the Australian Embassy in the USA website, usa.embassy.gov.au/defence-cooperation, accessed November 8, 2018. Further detail and the quote above, can be found on the Australian War Memorial website within the article "Remembering the battle of Hamel,"

Thus commenced a long history of defence engagement where “Australians have fought alongside Americans in every major US military action of the last century, including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq.”¹³

This case study considers the enduring nature of the Australian-US alliance, aspects of the relationship that have caused elements of ‘alliance fatigue’, reasons why the Gillard Government supported the FPI, and further examples during the Gillard Government’s administration where Australia has achieved synergies by embedding defence personnel and equipment with the US. Key outcomes for Australia associated from the embedding activities undertaken with the US are assessed as including an enhanced defence capability and increased opportunity for regional engagement, despite the prevalent fiscal pressures.

(1) The enduring nature of the Australian – United States Alliance

The ANZUS security treaty made between Australia, New Zealand, and the US was signed in San Francisco on 01 September 1951. At the time of signing, the recency of the Second World War and significant international regional uncertainty led Australia to look more to the US, rather than Britain, as Australia’s primary ally. Consequentially the strategic primacy of the US since World War II has fundamentally influenced the shaping of Australia’s strategic and defence planning. Due to disparity with US policy positions on nuclear powered and armed warships, the US suspended its obligations under the Treaty in respect of New Zealand in 1986, however the relationship with Australia has continued strongly.¹⁴ The endurance of the ANZUS alliance has been credited due to its flexibility, being able to adapt to post-Cold War circumstances, as well as to similarities in values such as liberal democracy, being held by both parties. The alliance’s flexibility is

www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/the-battle-of-hamel-100-years-on, accessed November 27, 2018.

¹³ Quote taken from the Australian Embassy in the USA website.

¹⁴ Aust. Gov. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [hereafter DFAT], 2018, www.info.dfat.gov.au/Info/Treaties/treaties.nsf/AllDocIDs/4D4287DDC882C3D6CA256B8300007B4B, accessed October 19, 2018.

credited in part due to the Treaty's vagueness and brevity. For example, Article IV of the Treaty states:

*Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.*¹⁵

The actual action to be taken is unspecified, which has allowed successive Australian and US governments to shift policy in accordance with changing strategic situations or shifting government perception and interpretations, without requiring any amendment of the Treaty. As noted by Brown and Rayner in their 2001 review of ANZUS after 50 years, regardless of ideology, successive Australian governments have all recognised the alliance as being critically important to Australia's security and hence the Treaty has remained relevant.¹⁶ This importance is clearly articulated within the 2009 *Defence White Paper*:

*Our alliance with the United States is our most important defence relationship. In day-to-day terms, the alliance gives us significant access to materiel, intelligence, research and development, communications systems, and skills and expertise that substantially strengthen the ADF. The alliance relationship is an integral element of our strategic posture... Without access to US capabilities, technology, and training, the ADF simply could not be the advanced force that it is today, and must be in the future, without the expenditure of considerable more money.*¹⁷

¹⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, "Australian Treaty Series 1952, No2, Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (ANZUS)," *Australasian Legal Information Institute*, 1952, www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1952/2.html.

¹⁶ Brown, G. and Rayner, L., "Upside, Downside: ANZUS: After Fifty Years, Current Issues Brief 3 2001-02," *Parliament of Australia*, August 2001, www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib0102/02CIB03.

¹⁷ Aust. DoD, "Defence White Paper 2009," pp. 93-94.

A further benefit, as foreseen in 2001 by Dr. Ashton Calvert, then Australian Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was that the longevity of the alliance provided a solid basis on which Australia and the US could consult, in order to coordinate policies and so “maximise the effectiveness of our respective regional strategies.”¹⁸ Ten years on, the Gillard Government’s support of the FPI, was an example of such coordination, supporting recommendations from both US and Australian internal Force Posture reviews. The Treaty itself, has only been invoked once, by Australian Prime Minister John Howard, in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks on America, however the enduring ANZUS relationship has led to several bilateral defence activities such as the FPI.

(2) Hints of alliance fatigue

The Gillard Government administration coincided with a major shift in US strategic policy, in particular the US ‘pivot to the Asia-Pacific’. China’s rising power was seen to be challenging America’s regional influence as well as the security of regional nations, calling into question US security guarantees and the strength of alliances. In 2009 at the beginning of the Obama administration, the US initially tried to engage China on a policy of ‘shared interests’ and then in 2010 adjusted their foreign policy in order to shore-up US leadership in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁹ The Obama Administration’s *Defense Strategic Guidance*, published in January 2012 advised that the US military would of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. This policy addressed the heightened level of US concern with regards to China’s rising power, growing investment in ‘anti-access/area-denial’ (A2/AD) capabilities and aggressive behaviour within the South China Sea and supported the fundamental and enduring US core interests of defending its view on freedom of the seas, and maintaining naval and air

¹⁸ DFAT, “Secretary’s Speech: The United States Alliance and Australian Foreign Policy Past, Present and Future,” June 29, 2001, dfat.gov.au/news/speeches/Pages/secretarys-speech-the-united-states-alliance-and-australian-foreign-policy-past-present-and-future.aspx.

¹⁹ Zhao S., “Shaping the regional context of China’s rise: how the Obama administration brought back hedge in its engagement with China,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 21, No. 75, 2012, pp. 369-389.

superiority in the Western Pacific.²⁰ China's rapid military modernisation and transformation, especially naval modernisation, had created a security dilemma for regional states, as well as nations with vested interests in the vast quantities of maritime commerce transiting through the region. The US response as outlined by the *2012 Defense Strategic Guidance* was to increase its military presence and re-engage with the Asia Pacific as a distinctly important region.²¹ A key enabler to the US 'rebalance' was securing enhanced access to the region via the 2011 US-Australia FPI.

Australian domestic reception to the FPI was mixed; the reinvigorated US policy toward the Asia-Pacific region had sparked debate regarding Australia's 'hedging' behaviour with respect to China and the US. Internationally, China immediately questioned the appropriateness of the "military build-up in the region."²² Prominent strategic analyst Hugh White's assessment that Australia's future was dependent on the relationship between the US and China and that Australia should or eventually would be forced to choose between them triggered fierce discussion both within Australia and by international analysts.²³ Whilst consensus seemed to hold that the Australian government was by supporting the FPI, remaining steadfast allies of the US,²⁴ White's assessment that while continued US primacy would be the best outcome for Australia "the chances of it being achieved in the face of China's power and ambitions [were] low," was received by US analysts as notice that most Asian-Pacific governments would likely be having a similar discussion, seeking to reconcile the US's future regional influence with opportunities to benefit economically from China's rise.²⁵

²⁰ Nguyen, P., "Deciphering the shift in America's South China Sea policy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2016, p. 390.

²¹ Thayer, C. A., *Southeast Asia: patterns of security cooperation*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, September 2010, pp. 8-12.

²² "Gillard, Obama detail US troop deployment," ABC News, November 16, 2011, www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-16/gillard2c-obama-announce-darwin-troop-deployment/3675596.

²³ Dittmer, L., "Sino-Australian relations: a triangular perspective," *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2012, pp. 662-663, p. 672.

²⁴ Ayson, R., "Choosing ahead of time? Australia, New Zealand and the US-China contest in Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2012, pp. 338-364.

²⁵ Hugh White is quoted within US analyst Brad Glosserman's opinion piece "US, China and Australia's Asian century: a view on Hugh White's argument," *East Asia Forum*, December 5, 2011,

Within Australia, anti-alliance sentiment was enflamed by prominent Australians such as former Prime Minister Paul Keating arguing for greater independence from the US and a strengthened relationship with China.²⁶ Keating criticised Australia's relationship with the US as being too 'subservient', and rejected the idea that Australia had no choice but to back US rivalry against a rising China. Keating firmly believed China to be "the central stabilising force in East Asia," and had long supported closer interactions with Southeast Asia.²⁷ Some commentators suggested that Australia should prevail on the US to make room for China, and overtly advise against a policy of containing China.²⁸ Further alliance criticisms included that it complicated regional relations due to perceptions that Australian actions were in support of US-sponsored agendas rather than as an independent regional actor;²⁹ that furthering the alliance had on occasion 'overshadowed' operational priorities,³⁰ and that the US could diminish Australia's regional engagement influence by being a "bigger and better" partner.³¹

For Australia, achieving an appropriate balance between interoperability and independence remains perhaps the key challenge posed by the alliance. Community consultation conducted in 2014 prior to generating what would become the *2016 Defence White Paper* found general widespread support for the US alliance "as a pillar of Australia's defence and security," though also noted that this support coexisted with

www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/12/05/us-china-and-australia-s-asian-century-a-view-on-hugh-white-s-argument/

²⁶ Fullilove, M., "Down and out Down Under: Australia's uneasy American alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 5, 2017.

²⁷ The following articles refer to Keating's stance regarding China and the US: He, L. L. and Sappideen, R., "Free Trade Agreements and the US-China-Australia relationship in the Asia-Pacific region," *Asia Pacific Law Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2013, pp. 67-69; Earl, G., "US Wrong on China: Keating," *Australian Financial Review*, August 7, 2012.

²⁸ He and Sappideen, "Free Trade Agreements," pp. 67-69.

²⁹ An example being the strong criticism raised by China when Australia considered increasing security dialogues with Japan and South Korea as discussed in Brown and Rayner, "*Upside, Downside.*"

³⁰ Such as the decision to acquire from the US an unproven and yet to be developed combat system for the operationally delayed Collins-Class submarine rather than the Navy's submarine professionals preferred and proven German offering., see Brown and Rayner, "*Upside, Downside.*"

³¹ Bergin et. al., "Terms of engagement," p. 69.

shifting perceptions of its benefits.³² These alternate views included that the perceived benefits were “debateable” accompanied by claims that Australia’s “uncritical” support of US foreign policy had given a “vener of legitimacy” to policies that were unsustainable, unachievable, highly divisive and “ultimately corrosive of American authority,”³³ that the alliance had led Australia into multiple wars of questionable benefit such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq and also predisposed Australia to extremely expensive US defence contracts.³⁴ Within his 2014 submission to the *Defence White Paper* consultation team, former Australian Prime Minister Malcom Fraser advocated for complete military independence from the US, claiming that stationing US Marines in Darwin under the FPI combined with the Pine Gap facility offensive capabilities had consequently made it impossible for Australia to stay out of any Western Pacific conflict involving the US.³⁵

The monetary aspect of the Australia-US relationship further complicated Alliance sentiments. Whilst access to US technology has allowed Australia to maintain a regional capability advantage, and is essential for interoperability with US forces, such access is expensive and dependent on US supply. However, as noted by Brown and Rayner’s 2001 review of ANZUS, without the close relationship with the US, Australia would lose most of its regional technical advantage and would possibly have to quadruple defence spending to achieve an equivalent strategic environment.³⁶ In his 2014 submission, Malcolm Fraser acknowledged the monetary liability of independence, however his greater concern, was Australia’s loss of autonomy: that Australia’s virtual complete dependence on the US for key material and resupply in

³² Aust. DoD, “*Guarding against uncertainty: Australian attitudes to Defence 2015*,” 2015, pp. 33-39, www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/docs/GuardingUncertainty.pdf.

³³ Beeson, M., “Australia’s relationship with the United States: the case for greater independence,” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2003, p. 388.

³⁴ Marrickville Peace Group, “Questioning the value of the Australia/US alliance: submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper by the Marrickville Peace Group,” *Australian Government Department of Defence*, 2014, www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/docs/071-MarrickvillePeaceGroup.pdf.

³⁵ Fraser, M., “Submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper,” *Australian Government Department of Defence*, 2014, www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/docs/127-Fraser.pdf.

³⁶ Brown and Rayner, “Upside, Downside.”

order to sustain any but the most minor of operations effectively ceded the US leverage over Australia's military engagement. This concern was also raised by Brown and Rayner:

*[It] is almost literally true that Australia cannot go to war without the consent and support of the United States. This represents a substantial sacrifice of national freedom of action, and must be counted as a significant cost.*³⁷

General consensus from the debate over Australia's options seemed to hold that "the worst scenario for Australia would be for its largest trading partner and significant ally to collide," and that Australia's best option would be to keep the alliance and hedge against China's economic leverage by broadening and diversifying trade and investment options.³⁸ Respected regional strategy specialist, Carlyle Thayer recommended a layered approach to improve Australia's security without necessarily choosing between the US and China. This included enhancing current multilateral security ties, encouraging the US to become more involved in Southeast Asia, and for Australia to revitalise its own bilateral security ties with key Southeast Asian states "in order to increase the region's strategic weight in dealing with external powers."³⁹ Despite the pressures from some elements of the Australian community to reduce or even sever the relationship with the US, the Gillard Government's support of the FPI is in keeping with such strategic 'hedging' advice.

(3) Support for the 2011 US-Australia Force Posture Initiatives

The US-Australia FPI was jointly announced on 16 November 2011 with a formalised agreement coming into force on 31 March 2015.⁴⁰ An

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Terada, T., "Australia and China's rise: ambivalent and inevitable balancing," *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2013, p. 131.

³⁹ Thayer, "Southeast Asia," pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰ DFAT, *The Force Posture Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America*, 2015, www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/ATS/2015/1.pdf.

extension of the existing Defence relationship, the two initiatives included the Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D), a six-month rotational deployment of US Marines to Australian defence establishments located in Darwin; and, Enhanced Air Cooperation (EAC), allowing increased rotational visits by US Air Force aircraft to bases in Northern Australia. Commencing from 2012, the MRF-D would gradually build-up from an initial rotation of 200 US Marines to a 2500 person Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) by 2020. Whilst in Australia the US Marines would undertake “a range of activities including training unilaterally and with the [ADF] and other Indo-Pacific nations’ forces.”⁴¹ The EAC activities did not commence until 2017 and have included increased participation of US air elements such as F-22 Raptor fifth generation strike fighters and strategic bombers which is anticipated will enhance the RAAF’s transition to a fifth generation Air Force.

Given that there were domestic pressures to reduce or even sever the defence relationship with the US, it is intuitive to consider what factors may have encouraged the Gillard Government to support the FPI. The FPI has been interpreted as providing evidence that both allies were confirming the importance of the US-Australia alliance, of highlighting the increasing geopolitical value of Australian territory towards regional engagement, and that it provided an opportunity for cooperation where both countries might develop “a relationship of partners jointly engaging in the Asia-Pacific region.”⁴² Financial motivations should also be considered—fiscal restrictions were a priority for the Gillard Government which found itself having to cope during the aftermath of the GFC—the Government needed to identify ways of achieving an appropriate defence posture, but with minimal funding.

As displayed in Figure 2 below, during the Gillard Government, Australian defence expenditure as a proportion of GDP, was at its lowest level since the end of the Cold War. One aspect of the Gillard

⁴¹ General MRF-D information can be found on the Aust. DoD website: www.defence.gov.au/Initiatives/USFPI/Marines.asp, accessed January 2, 2019.

⁴² Ishihara, Y., “Australia’s Security Policy: Enhancing Engagements in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *East Asian Strategic Review 2013*, *The National Institute for Defense Studies*, 2013, p. 80.

Government supporting the FPI can be recognised as acknowledging that it is through the Alliance that Australia gains admittedly expensive, though compared to without the relationship, affordable, access to capability, intelligence and technological benefits, as well as protection afforded through extended nuclear deterrence. Simply put, financially, it remained in Australia's interests to perpetuate the security relationship with the US and supporting the FPI was a means to do so. Another associated financial incentive is that the high level of regional engagement cooperation with increased opportunities to share facilities and equipment would also present a way to reduce costs.⁴³

A strategic consideration that supports endorsing the FPI, was that it would assist in perpetuating US regional engagement. The *2009 Defence White Paper* recognised that the presence of the US acted as a stabilising force within the Asia-Pacific region and cautioned that “a potential contraction of US strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific region” would “adversely affect Australia's interests, regional stability and global security.” The Gillard Government's support of the FPI, facilitating US access to the region, could thus be perceived as acting to reduce this risk.

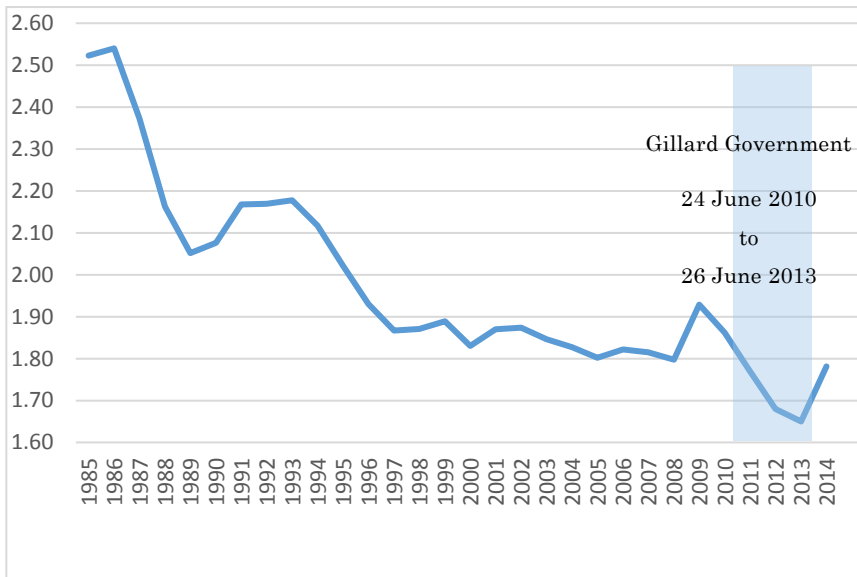
A further benefit attained from the FPI was enhanced resource security. In June 2011, five months prior to the FPI announcement, then Minister for Defence Stephen Smith announced a Force Posture Review (FPR) to assess whether the ADF was correctly geographically positioned to meet Australia's current and future strategic challenges.⁴⁴ The Review built on the strategic and capability judgements made within the *2009 Defence White Paper* with the Review's final report being submitted in March 2012. While the Review focused on ADF requirements, the findings complimented activities to be undertaken with the US as part of the US Global FPR initiatives involving Australia. One of the factors considered by the ADF FPR was energy security and security issues associated with expanding offshore resource exploitation in the Australian northwest and northern approaches. The Review finding that a more visible military presence was warranted in northern

⁴³ Ishihara, “Australia's Security Policy,” pp. 77-78.

⁴⁴ Aust. DoD, “ADF Posture Review,” *Defence Publications*, June 2011, www.defence.gov.au/Publications/Reviews/ADFPosture/.

Australia and its approaches, to address perceptions of a need to protect the rapidly growing and economically important resource developments in the northwest, would be greatly supported by the FPI-planned increase in US military presence in northern Australia.

Figure 2. Australian Defence Expenditure (%GDP)



Source: Data was obtained from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) website, data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=2017&locations=AU&start=1978&view=chart, accessed 01 January 2019.

The ADF FPR noted energy security as a significant concern for rapidly growing Asia-Pacific economies, and that “tensions over resources [might] exacerbate existing security problems such as territorial disputes.” This assessment placed an onus on Australia as a major supplier of natural resources to manage regional perceptions as

to Australia's ability to ensure the security of these resources.⁴⁵ The Review considered the significant resource development investment underway in the northwest of Australia, with particular focus on liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects. It anticipated (accurately) that by 2015 Australia would become the world's second largest LNG exporter after Qatar, exporting LNG to Japan, China, Taiwan, India and Malaysia. Australian offshore LNG projects areas were moving northwards, closer to Indonesia and Timor-Leste and bringing security implications for both the offshore assets and the safe transit of exports. The increased US presence in northern Australia achieved by the FPI, and the consequential increased US presence within Southeast Asia would by association, provide Australia a stronger defensive posture in regards to these economically important resources.

A further significant benefit obtained from the FPI would be increased opportunity for the ADF to expand joint training engagement with the US as well as regional countries. In particular, as the ADF planned to introduce two LHDs from 2014, increased training opportunities with the US Marines who have significant experience with amphibious assault vessels would greatly assist in developing the ADF's nascent amphibious capability. The LHDs were intended to provide the basis of Australia's future regional stabilization operations and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) capability and it was also recognized that the increased opportunity for joint training offered a way to maintain interoperability with the US after the "winding down" of operations in Afghanistan.⁴⁶

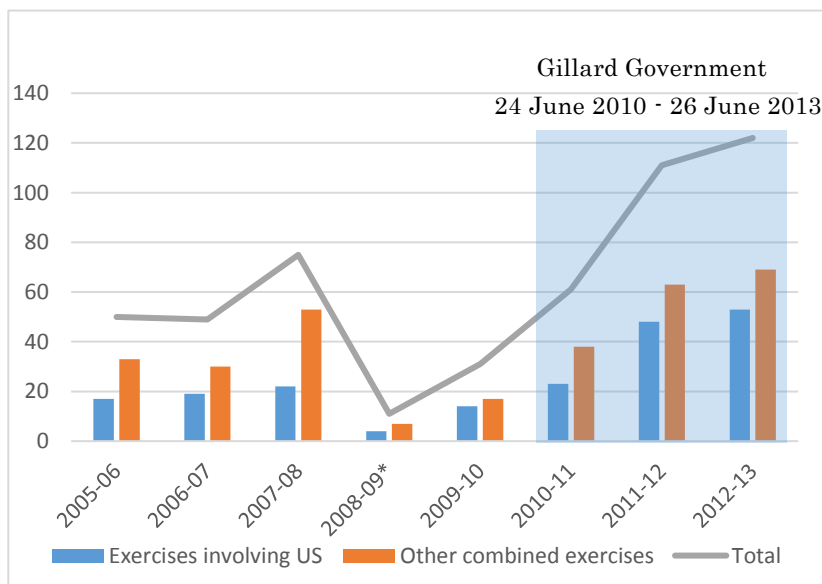
Perhaps the most important prospect the FPI afforded to the Gillard Government was the opportunity to enhance Australia's access to the US's bilateral relationships and increase future opportunities for regional engagement. As depicted below within Figure 3, during the Gillard Government's administration, ADF participation in *combined exercises* (an exercise or activity involving one or more Services of the ADF with the forces of other countries) where the US was also a participant dramatically increased. Some of this increase in regional

⁴⁵ Hawke, A. and Smith, R., "Australian Defence Force Posture Review," *Australian Government Department of Defence*, March 30, 2012, pp. 12-13, www.defence.gov.au/Publications/Reviews/ADFPPosture/Docs/Report.pdf.

⁴⁶ Ishihara, "Australia's Security Policy," p. 80.

engagement might be attributed to enhanced access to US allies. For example, Exercise *Balikatan* had always been a bilateral activity between the US and the Philippines, without other participants other than invited observers. Following the ratification in the Philippine Senate of the Status of Visiting Forces Agreement with Australia in September 2012, Australia joined as an observer in 2013 and has then fully participated from 2014 onwards.⁴⁷ Another US ally, Japan was invited as an observer to *Balikatan* in 2016 and became a full participant from 2017 onwards, depicting a trend of US allies, being drawn into enhanced regional engagement.

Figure 3. ADF participation in combined exercises



*In November 2008 the ADF Headquarters commenced the move from various locations in Sydney and Canberra to a new purpose built facility in Bungendore, which was officially opened in March 2009 - this may account for the sudden drop in exercises reported for 2008-09.

⁴⁷ Fonbuena, C., "Australia joins Balikatan war games for the first time," *Rappler*, May 17, 2014, www.rappler.com/nation/58208-australia-balikatan.

Source: Exercise data was obtained from Australian Government Department of Defence Annual Reports 2005-6 to 2012-13, www.defence.gov.au/AnnualReports/, and where available, cross checked against online news reports to confirm US participation; consequently, US participation rates may actually be higher than that displayed. Data prior to 2005-06 and after 2012-13 was unable to be obtained as outside these years only participation in ‘major’ exercises was reported.

Direct evidence of the link between the FPI and increasing opportunities for regional engagement can be found through participation in Exercise *Koolendong*. Held in Australia’s Northern Territory, *Koolendong* was established in 2013 and is a US-led Marine Corp training activity involving the MFR-D and the Australian Army. In 2016 the annual exercise had expanded to include for the first time the French Armed Forces (New Caledonia) and a group of senior Defence officers from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore were invited to observe the nature of the MFR-D training. The display was intended to promote “the benefits of regional security and cooperation” as well as to extend an invitation for involvement with future training activities with the MRF-D and ADF.⁴⁸ A similar opportunity was organised in 2017 when senior Defence officials from Malaysia, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam were invited to observe Exercise *Crocodile Strike* so as to learn about the FPI and ADF and US bilateral capabilities. The exercise was intended to demonstrate how Australia and the US would work together in response to a humanitarian crisis in a regional location and again invitations were extended as to the opportunities for future participation in training and exercises.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Aust. DoD, “International Defence Officers visit Exercise Koolendong,” *Defence News and Media*, August 10, 2016, news.defence.gov.au/media/media-releases/international-defence-officers-visit-exercise-koolendong.

⁴⁹ Aust. DoD, “Australian Defence Force and United States Marines demonstrate benefits of combined training initiatives,” *Defence News and Media*, September 1, 2017, news.defence.gov.au/media/media-releases/australian-defence-force-and-united-states-marines-demonstrate-benefits.

(4) Further examples of the ADF embedding with the United States

The US is the nation with which Australia has the greatest level of military cooperation and has had a military presence in Australia for over fifty years. The Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap is perhaps the most well-known instance, supporting the monitoring of compliance with arms control and disarmament agreements, providing information on terrorist activities, supporting submarine and satellite-based communications systems, and providing ballistic missile early warning information to the US. Pine Gap is considered the ‘pre-eminent’ example of the strategic cooperation between Australia and the US, with both countries benefiting from the joint intelligence collection capabilities.⁵⁰

In 2018, Australia had approximately 580 Defence personnel in the US, the majority of whom were embedded into the US military, either in US units or working alongside US partners on combined project teams on issues including operational planning and intelligence, capability development, military education, and legal support.⁵¹ Testament to the closeness of Australia’s relationship with the US is that Australia is one of the few nations whose military personnel have been entrusted with full operational control of US military personnel. For example, in 2013, two senior positions at the US Pacific Command Headquarters (PACOM) were filled by Australians, including the first time a non-American had served in the position of Deputy Commanding General for Operations, a critical leadership position.⁵² Such opportunities provide invaluable leadership experience for personnel from a middle-sized power.

A further example was the embedding of the RAN frigate HMAS *Sydney* for three months from May 2013 with the US Navy’s 7th Fleet in Yokosuka, Japan. *Sydney* was attached to Carrier Strike Group 5 as an escort for the carrier USS *George Washington*. *Sydney’s* deployment drew some Australian domestic criticism given the heightened tensions in the region due to North Korea’s escalating provocations and increased maritime tensions between China and Japan, as if conflict had occurred,

⁵⁰ Aust. DoD, “Defence White Paper 2009,” p. 94.

⁵¹ ADF personnel figures in the USA are quoted from the Australian Embassy in the USA website.

⁵² Jennings, P., “Military ties that bind us,” *ASPI Opinion*, April 2, 2013, www.aspi.org.au/opinion/military-ties-bind-us.

the attachment would have drawn Australia into participation. Then Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith advised that the deployment was a clear indication of Australia's support of the US's commitment to South Korea and of Australia's support of both South Korea and Japan.⁵³ For the RAN, embedding with the Strike Group was an important opportunity to increase knowledge and skills prior to the anticipated delivery of the RAN's new Hobart-class Air Warfare Destroyers (AWDs) from 2017. The bilateral engagement was also an opportunity to strengthen interoperability between the navies, through a series of planned cooperative exercises. A precedent for such interaction occurred in June 2011, also during the Gillard Government's administration, when HMAS *Darwin* embedded with the 7th Fleet. At that time, after conducting exercises off Japan, *Darwin* and the Strike Group transited to Australia to participate in Exercise *Talisman Sabre 11*, with *Darwin* remaining an embedded unit of the Strike Group until the conclusion of the Exercise on 26 July.⁵⁴

Combined exercise and training programs also enhance the alliance. The ADF participates in several US-led exercises and regularly hosts US forces for visits and training exercises. Established in 2005, the biennial *Talisman Sabre* is Australia's largest military exercise conducted jointly with the US, and in 2017 involved more than 33,000 personnel, more than 220 aircraft and 36 ships. The Exercise is focused on mid-intensity, high-end warfighting, and provides an invaluable opportunity to conduct operations in a combined, joint and interagency environment. High intensity exercises such as *Talisman Sabre* are intended to ensure and demonstrate the ability of the US and ADF to work together with the highest levels of interoperability. In an effort to reduce the costs and improve the quality of bilateral training activities, Australia and the US have also worked closely together in developing the ADF's Joint Combined Training Capability (JCTC) which officially opened in November 2010. By use of networked simulation technology, the JCTC further facilitates the high intensity training

⁵³ Nicholson, B., "Warship to join US fleet in hot zone," *The Australian*, April 26, 2013, www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/warship-to-join-us-fleet-in-hot-zone/news-story/f1ee929de7f713879dc7f899c47c69a1.

⁵⁴ HMAS *Darwin* background was obtained from the RAN website, www.navy.gov.au/hmas-darwin-part-four, accessed November 8, 2018.

gained through the extensive combined exercise program existing between Australia and the US. The simulation training allows tactical level war-fighters, commanders and operational planners to exercise a greater number of scenarios and the results can then be used to inform real world planning and conduct of combined operations.⁵⁵

It is clear from the above examples that the advanced nature of the relationship between Australia and the US has permitted an extremely high degree of interoperability and trust between both countries. For Australia, activities utilising embedding appear a very effective method of maintaining and enhancing US bilateral engagement.

2 - Case Study: Enhancing influence by embedding in the South Pacific

*Our contribution to regional security is not restricted to deploying forces in a conflict or crisis. Rather, our efforts are focused on reducing the risk of conflict through building trust and partnerships through regular interaction with other nations.*⁵⁶

*The more capable our regional partners, the less they will feel compelled to rely upon the strategic assistance of major powers, some of whose interests may be inimical to ours. Also, more capable partners make for more effective coalitions when we come together and work towards common objectives.*⁵⁷

In order to have the capacity to participate in or lead military coalitions in collaboration with allies and partners, the ADF develops and maintains various bilateral defence partnerships. Such relationships are pursued systematically with long-term investment so as to both ensure effective interaction when crises emerge and for their value to Australia's strategic interests in helping promote stable strategic frameworks in the immediate neighbourhood. Particularly in an era of changing power relativities in the region and competing external influences, relationships founded on mutual understanding

⁵⁵ Hawke and Smith, "Australian Defence Force Posture Review," p. 53.

⁵⁶ Aust. DoD, "Defence White Paper 2013: Defending Australia and its national interests," 2013, p. 24, www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/.

⁵⁷ Aust. DoD, "Defence White Paper 2009," p. 39.

and trust can potentially offset advantages some countries may gain from having greater financial influencing ability.⁵⁸ This is where promoting soft power mechanisms, intended to “[build and leverage] perceptions of attractiveness, legitimacy, and ability to improve a nation’s influence and standing and advance policy outcomes,” can provide such advantages and from the analysis conducted within this case study, where embedding practices appear to support Australia’s influence ability.⁵⁹

As a middle power, and with financial pressures expected from a small population-base, Australia must leverage strategic advantage from financially sound investments where it can. During 2013, Australian strategic analysts cautioned that the nature of regional engagement was changing, becoming “more about strategic partnerships and less about aid and assistance.” They recommended that the ADF should focus on the maritime dimension, and that the RAN “should increase the number of personnel posted in advisor and training positions in the region.”⁶⁰ Implied by this advice was that constructive and informed engagement with regional countries, achieved through the embedding of defence personnel was a worthwhile endeavour for the ADF to facilitate enduring partnerships.

(1) Defence Cooperation Program

A core and enduring element of how the ADF engages with regional militaries is through the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP). Australia established the DCP during the 1960s as a tool to engage internationally with both Southeast Asian and South Pacific neighbours. The Program’s objective is to improve Australia’s security by developing close and enduring links with regional partners’ militaries and police forces at the tactical operational and strategic levels, so as to support their capacity to protect their sovereignty, work effectively with the ADF and contribute to regional security. Activities focused on by the Program include building partner capacity in “[HADR], peacekeeping, counter-

⁵⁸ Kherbi, A., “Development’s security: a new perspective on international security,” *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2007, pp. 14-18.

⁵⁹ Bryne, C., “Australia’s New Colombo Plan: enhancing regional soft power through student mobility,” *International Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2016, p. 110.

⁶⁰ Bergin et. al., “Terms of engagement,” pp. 8-9.

terrorism, maritime security, and military governance and professionalism”.⁶¹ This cooperation is intended to promote both the capacity of the partner countries and improve Australia’s capacity to work with them in response to common security challenges. The DCP provides assistance through activities such as the Pacific Patrol Boat Program, the provision of in-country advisors and infrastructure development, support for participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises and Australia-based training for selected regional defence force personnel.

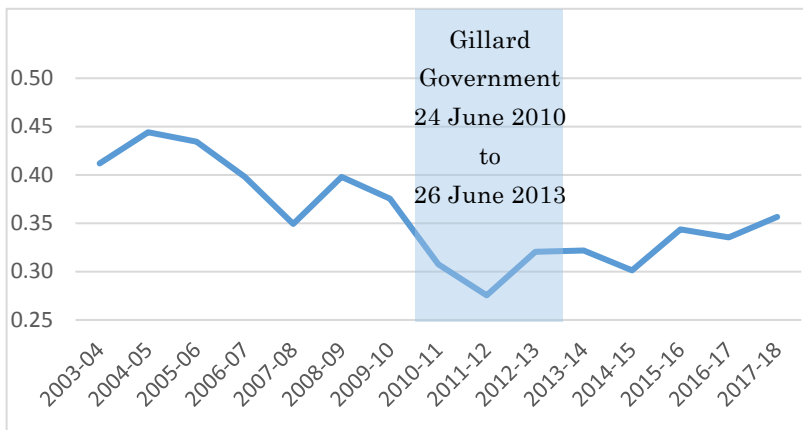
In order to achieve a reduction in spending of \$5.5 billion, in 2012 the Gillard Government announced that many of the *2009 Defence White Paper* recommendations, such as the purchase of new submarines, frigates and combat aircraft would be either delayed or cut. The Government’s efforts to achieve a federal budget surplus saw 2012-13 defence spending reduced to 1.56 per cent of GDP, the lowest it had been since 1938.⁶² Despite this trend of declining defence expenditure (see Figure 2), it is interesting to note that funding for the DCP actually increased. As displayed below within Figure 4, during the Gillard Government DCP funding as a percentage of total defence funding changed from a decreasing to increasing trend. This ‘inflection’ in regional engagement funding suggests that during a period when the Government was heavily scrutinising all expenditure, and delaying the acquisition of new assets the Gillard Government saw value in increasing regional engagement, particularly through the methods employed by the DCP.⁶³

⁶¹ A detailed explanation of the intent of the Defence Cooperation Program is provided within Aust. DoD, ‘Portfolio Budget Statements 2018-19,’ 2019, pp. 117-119, www.defence.gov.au/Budget/18-19/2018-19_Defence_PBS_00_Complete.pdf.

⁶² Watt, D. and Payne, A., ‘Trends in Defence expenditure since 1901,’ *Parliament of Australia*, 2014, www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201314/DefenceExpenditure.

⁶³ During a September 2012 speech, then Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Air Marshal Mark Binskin inferred that Defence current DCP funding was too modest considering that the DCP was “a core part of the way the ADF engages with regional militaries through joint exercises, training and officer exchanges—and [that Defence should] provide a dramatic step-up in funding for engagement.” Quote taken from Bergin et. al., ‘Terms of engagement,’ p. 9.

Figure 4. Defence Cooperation Program Funding as a percentage of Total Defence Funding (budget estimated actual figures)



Source: Data obtained from 2004-05 to 2018-19 Aust. Gov. Defence Portfolio Budget Statements, www.defence.gov.au/Budget/; and Defence Annual Reports, www.defence.gov.au/AnnualReports/

(2) Pacific Patrol Boat Program

Many of the activities supported through the DCP directly involve the embedding of ADF personnel and equipment with regional partners, or conversely, bringing foreign personnel to Australia. The Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP) is a prime example of Australia's use of embedding defence personnel and equipment in order to contribute to regional security and develop enduring partnerships. Through the provision of in-country advisors, infrastructure and technical support, the PPBP is considered to be "the largest and most complex DCP project ever funded by Australia," and the "centrepiece" of Australia's engagement with the South Pacific Region.⁶⁴

The intent of the PPBP is to assist in the development of regional maritime security capacity on the premise that increased regional

⁶⁴ Bateman, S. and Bergin, A., "Maritime Security," *Australia and the South Pacific, ASPI Special Report*, Issue 12, March 2008, p. 62.

stability and security, makes Australia more secure. As outlined within the *2009 Defence White Paper*, by donating patrol vessels and embedding naval maritime and technical advisors, Australia aims to assist Pacific island countries to develop their capacity to independently “enforce their sovereignty, protect their resources and counter transnational crime.”⁶⁵ After their ‘gifting,’ the patrol boats are considered sovereign assets of the participating nations and are used by the Pacific navies and police maritime wings principally for maritime surveillance and law enforcement tasks. Since the PPBP commenced in 1987, Australia has gifted 22 patrol boats to 12 Pacific Island countries, provided long-term Australian sustainment, including refit work conducted in Australia, extensive training for crews, supporting infrastructure, and advisory support through 25 embedded RAN maritime surveillance and technical advisors. For Australia, the in-country presence of the naval advisers have been important symbols of Australia’s security interest in the region and in turn have been central to the regional access Australia has enjoyed as a result of the Program.

Recently, from October 2018, the PPBP was succeeded by the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP). As the original patrol vessels are approaching the end of their serviceable life, Australia will progressively replace them with 19 larger and more capable Guardian-class Patrol Boats, to be gifted from late 2018–23. Two further vessels will be gifted to Timor-Leste in 2023.⁶⁶ The PMSP is a \$2 billion commitment to the South Pacific region over the next 30 years, and has a slightly expanded approach in comparison to the PPBP; in addition to the Pacific Patrol Boat replacement, the revised program includes integrated regional aerial surveillance and enhanced efforts to strengthen regional security coordination.

During 2011, the Gillard Government initiated additional bilateral embedding measures to strengthen stability and support security within the South Pacific. During bilateral talks held in Wellington, New Zealand on 16 February 2011, Prime Ministers Julia Gillard and John Key welcomed an agreement to develop a joint framework for crisis

⁶⁵ Aust. DoD, “Defence White Paper 2009,” pp. 98-99.

⁶⁶ Aust. DoD, “Annual Report 2017-18,” 2018, www.defence.gov.au/AnnualReports/17-18/Features/Maritime.asp.

management and cooperation. Building on joint initiatives intended to support security and stabilisation within the South Pacific, they committed to the creation of an ANZAC Ready Response Force (RRF) which would plan and exercise for joint emergency responses within the region. From March 2011, to enable a collaborative approach to developing plans, New Zealand Defence Force personnel were embedded within the ADF planning staff in the ADF Deployable Joint Force Headquarters in Brisbane. Any decision to activate the ANZAC RRF would subsequently be coordinated through both countries' national emergency response frameworks with the command and force structure mutually determined for each mission.⁶⁷

(3) Mitigating against strategic intrusion

The *2009 Defence White Paper* clearly states that Australia's enduring interest in the South Pacific region spans both humanitarian and strategic reasons.⁶⁸ The *2016 Defence White Paper*, more explicitly advises that Australia is seeking to be *the* principal security partner for Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island countries. Developing strong relationships and interoperability with South Pacific countries not only facilitates the rapid response of Australian HADR support, but by taking a leadership role within the South Pacific to promote regional resilience and stability, permits Australia to hedge against the risk of external actors taking advantage of fragile or unstable states, and mitigating the possibility of strategic intrusion into the region by "potentially hostile powers able to project military power against Australia."⁶⁹ As a means to help mitigate against this risk is where the strong relationships generated by maintaining the DCP appear to be sowing benefits as a soft power mechanism:

⁶⁷ Aust. DoD, "ANZAC Forces ready to respond in the modern era," *Defence News and Media*, June 23, 2011, <https://news.defence.gov.au/media/media-releases/anzac-forces-ready-respond-modern-era>; "ANZAC Ready Response Force," *Global Security.org*, July 9, 2011, www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/nz/rrf.htm.

⁶⁸ Aust. DoD, "Defence White Paper 2009," p. 35.

⁶⁹ Aust. DoD, "Defence White Paper 2016," 2016, p. 74, www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf.

*Australia enjoys some comparative advantages in this competitive environment. First, we've been in the game for a long time and have established a reputation as being a reasonably reliable partner, perhaps with fewer ulterior motives and clearer strategic interests than other countries. Overall, Australia's views of overall security are accepted as fitting with those of the region generally. That's not necessarily the case with the other extra-regional players in the region.*⁷⁰

Although traditionally both Australia and New Zealand have been the dominant nations providing support to South Pacific countries, recent, increased activity by countries such as China providing loans for large-scale infrastructure projects has increased concerns regarding external influence within the region.⁷¹ Australia cannot compete financially for influence with countries such as China but by investing in DCP activities such as the PPBP and its replacement, the PMSF, Australia has generated a high degree of trust, mutual understanding and cooperation with South Pacific countries. This supportive relationship has facilitated further cooperative engagement within the region with Australia recently announcing plans to establish a new Pacific Fusion Centre in mid-2019, focused on “strengthening the ability of Pacific governments to enforce their laws and protect their sovereignty” and in early 2019 will be establishing a new Australia Pacific Security College to “support regional strategic policy development”.⁷²

⁷⁰ Bergin et. al., “Terms of engagement,” p. 68.

⁷¹ Concerns regarding China’s increasing activity within the South Pacific are raised in Pearlman, J., “Australia, NZ to sign security pact with South Pacific nations,” *The Strait Times*, July 7, 2018, www.straitstimes.com/asia/australianz/australia-nz-to-sign-security-pact-with-south-pacific-nations; Dziedzic, S., Walsh, M. and Kilbride, J., “Australia signs declaration on Pacific climate ‘threat’, islands call on US to return Paris deal,” *ABC News*, September 7, 2018, www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-05/australia-and-pacific-nations-sign-climate-security-declaration/10204422.

⁷² Future Australian initiatives to support the South Pacific region were announced by Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne at the Pacific Islands Forum held in Nauru in early September 2018, as reported in Dziedzic, et. al., “Australia signs declaration on Pacific climate ‘threat’ .”

3 - Case Study: Enhancing influence through postgraduate engagement

This paper's opening quote suggested that one of the best ways for regional engagement to achieve its objectives was via enhancing personal relationships between regional defence organisations by "providing opportunities for overseas defence personnel to undergo training and education in Australia." International education has long been considered an "enduring and effective public diplomacy," where the "unique people-to-people experiences and interactions it facilitates... ..taps into soft power's affective and normative dimensions."⁷³ The DCP is the Australian government's mechanism facilitating such engagement, offering regional foreign military personnel the opportunity to undertake short- and long-term courses within Australian military and civilian educational institutions. Longer term courses include attending the Joint Australian Command and Staff Course (ACSC-J), an integrated military and university post-graduate level course supported through the Australian National University, or attending post-graduate programs at Australian universities, under the Defence Cooperation Scholarship Program (DCSP). This case study considers how offering such opportunities to embed foreign defence personnel in Australia-based courses is seen as a low-cost and effective way of cultivating constructive relationships with future regional leaders.

(1) Defence Cooperation Scholarship Program

The DCSP's key objectives are "to provide future defence leaders the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills to meet their potential, to help build a network of relationships between Australian and regional defence and security organisations, and to directly support the development of regional defence capabilities".⁷⁴ To help students successfully complete their academic studies, the Program offers financial support including study and living costs. Prospective

⁷³ Bryne, "Australia's New Colombo Plan," p. 113.

⁷⁴ Scopeglobal, "Defence Cooperation Scholarship Program," www.scopeglobal.com/programs&capabilities/defence-cooperation-scholarships-program/, accessed November 8, 2018.

candidates identify an Australia run program and then apply through their own military organisation and their local Australian Defence Attaché. If accepted, candidates are also eligible to attend a four week Defence Scholarship Familiarisation course held at the Defence International Training Centre (DITC), near Melbourne. The DITC course is intended to prepare foreign defence students for the teaching and learning styles characteristic of Australian tertiary institutions.⁷⁵ During both 2012 and in 2013, the DCSP funded 69 foreign defence students to enrol in postgraduate programs across 14 Australian universities.⁷⁶

Testimonials from DCSP participants suggest that they found the Program rewarding, not only because of the opportunity to achieve a post-graduate degree from world-renowned Australian universities but from both the positive cultural engagement and their belief that the experience would better help them meet their future military responsibilities. Many participants found the coursework challenging but were overwhelmingly grateful for the overall experience, commenting that it had really broadened their cultural awareness and would have a life-long impact on them.⁷⁷ The opportunity to develop personal relationships appears to be a key attraction of the Program, as evidenced by DCSP participants choosing in recent years *not* to select the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, when the University's defence studies programs became only available as online offerings.⁷⁸

(2) Military Alumni Associations

To help maintain the networks of people-to-people links established by the DCP, the ADF has developed military alumni associations. Membership is open to military personnel and defence civilians who have trained in, been posted to, or participated in, an exchange in

⁷⁵ Aust. DoD, "Defence Scholarship Familiarisation Course," www.defence.gov.au/DITC/courses/pdf/bulletin-dsf.pdf, accessed November 8, 2018.

⁷⁶ Bergin et. al., "Terms of engagement," pp. 77-78; 85-86.

⁷⁷ Defence Cooperation Scholarship Program testimonials were obtained from: www.defencescholarships.com.au/dcsp-preparation/testimonials, accessed December 16, 2018.

⁷⁸ Bergin et. al., "Terms of engagement," p. 77.

Australia and, to their Australian counterparts. For example, the Indonesia–Australia Defence Alumni Association (IKAHAN) was officially launched in March 2011 and involves an annual program of seminars, cultural and sporting events, aimed at encouraging participants to renew and maintain their relationships. After IKAHAN’s first year, membership had exceeded 800 members. The first anniversary celebrations in Jakarta were attended by the Indonesian Defence Minister, both countries’ Chiefs of Defence Force and Secretaries of Defence, indicating the high level of defence and government contacts such engagement initiatives can access.⁷⁹

The Australian Defence College (ADC) which oversees the ACSC-J has also established a Defence Alumni Network to enable graduates to “stay connected, share knowledge and promote the achievement of excellence in professional military education.”⁸⁰ Each year the ACSC-J hosts up to 180 students of which the majority are ADF Major equivalents, some are Australian Public Servants and approximately 45 are foreign personnel from over 20 countries. The ADC also oversees the Australian Defence Force Academy, the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, the ADF Warfare Training Centre, the ADF Peace Operations Training Centre, the ADF School of Languages and the DITC, all of which offer placements to foreign defence personnel. Consequently, for the ADF, alumni associations are a very cost effective way of maintaining and strengthening regional defence relationships that were fostered through the offer of training in Australia.

(3) Visiting Fellows Program and ASEAN-Australia Defence Postgraduate Scholarship

In 2013, Bergin et al., recommended within their Australian Strategic Policy Institute report assessing Australia’s regional defence diplomacy, that there was “clear value in supporting strategic dialogue at the Track 2 level with increased liaison between regional strategic and defence think-tanks. [That, the] DCP could [in addition to the DCSP] also support the attendance of regional officers as visiting fellows at the Sea

⁷⁹ Aust. Gov, “Australia in the Asian century: White Paper, October 2012,” p. 231.

⁸⁰ Bergin et. al., “Terms of engagement,” p. 78.

Power Centre, Land Warfare Studies Centre and Air Power Centre.”⁸¹ Since 2013 the RAN’s Sea Power Centre has hosted a Visiting Navy Fellows Program which has welcomed officers at the Lieutenant Commander and Commander level from key Indo-Pacific countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Pakistan, the Philippines, Fiji, and Japan.⁸² The Program aims to foster international defence relationships and mutual understanding whilst also contributing to regional maritime strategy and defence policy debates, publishing externally peer-reviewed papers generated by the Fellows on the Centre’s website.

More recently, in March 2018 at the Australia-ASEAN Special Summit, then Australian Defence Minister Marise Payne announced a new ASEAN-Australia Defence Postgraduate Scholarship Program would be established. Commencing in 2019, each year a representative from each ASEAN member state will be invited to attend a two-year Master of Strategic Studies postgraduate degree. The Program aims to foster cooperation and equip ASEAN practitioners further in the field of regional defence engagement by bringing together emerging defence and security leaders who would then be studying together and attending the same course.⁸³

(4) Engaging future regional leaders

Domestically based foreign military training programs have been considered a “low-cost, effective means of international influence and leverage” at least since the end of the Cold War. In 1976, when the US was scaling back its military and recognised that the US’s own security was “linked with broader international stability and security,” the US established a grant program called the International Military Education and Training (IMET) to “provide professional, leadership, and management training for senior military leaders and selected junior and

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Aust. DoD “Annual Report 2017-18,” p. 224.

⁸³ Aust. Gov, “ASEAN-Australia Defence Postgraduate Scholarship,” 2018, www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-releases/asean-australia-defence-postgraduate-scholarship.

middle-grade officers with evident leadership potential.”⁸⁴ Whilst the cost-effectiveness of such training, was in the US case initially implied because it advanced US foreign policy goals without “involving large U.S. military forces or the need to maintain overseas installations,” the Program was found to be an effective means of establishing relationships with potential future leaders which in the longer term translated “into improved communication with the United States and often into greater openness to US needs and interests”.⁸⁵ Today the IMET remains a core element of the US Department of Defense’s international engagement program.⁸⁶ Parallels in strategy could be made to the Gillard Government drawing down on engagement in Afghanistan and seeking to maximise regional influence through DCP engagement within a fiscally constrained environment. The longevity of the DCP and IMET despite the fiscal challenges faced by both countries might also be attributed to hedging attempts against strategic intrusion into the ‘education avenue’ of enhancing regional engagement. For, if Australia and the US ceased these programs, with their coincident exposure to Australian and US cultural values and furthering of mutual understanding, such a situation might permit other less strategically preferred competitors to better place their own educational offerings and potentially reap the associated influence and access.

Within the *2013 Defence White Paper* the Gillard Government recognised that regional “competition for access and influence” would only increase, and that “consideration of Australia’s interests and views [would be] less assured.” This assessment was coupled with guidance that Australia’s defence international engagement needed to be geared towards grasping opportunities within the Indo-Pacific region and “[seizing] opportunities to build deeper partnerships” whilst at the same

⁸⁴ Taw, J. M. and McCoy Jr., W. H., “International Military Student Training: Beyond Tactics,” *RAND Corporation*, 1993, p. v, www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3634.pdf.

⁸⁵ Research found that in some countries, a much higher percentage of the military’s leadership had received US training than had military personnel in general. See Taw and McCoy Jr., “International Military Student Training: Beyond Tactics,” pp. 1-4.

⁸⁶ IMET is currently administered by the US Department of Defense’s Security Cooperation Agency. IMET goals can be viewed at www.dsca.mil/programs/international-military-education-training-imet, accessed December 16, 2018.

time working towards strengthening the multilateral security frameworks in our region.⁸⁷ Establishing relationships with future regional leaders through postgraduate engagement programs is a viable measure towards supporting Australia's interests at such forums. The commitment made within the *2016 Defence White Paper* to “[double] the training Defence provides in Australia for international military students over the next 15 years” as part of increased investment in the DCP, continues to recognise that there is strategic value in the postgraduate engagement of foreign military personnel.⁸⁸

Conclusion

*Regional defence engagement brings significant benefits to Australia's defence capabilities by familiarising Australian defence personnel with the environments, operating procedures, cultures and capabilities of regional countries and allowing them to interact with their counterparts. The defence agenda looms large in many regional countries, and regional militaries have considerable domestic political influence, so our defence engagement is an important part of our regional relations.*⁸⁹

This paper considers how the practice of embedding defence personnel in bilateral engagement programs has supported Australian national strategy. To do so it examined the period during the Gillard Government which ran from 24 June 2010 to 26 June 2013, coinciding with emerging major power changes within the Asia-Pacific region as well as significant fiscal pressures which resulted in the lowest level of Australian defence spending since the Cold War. During this period, the Gillard Government made a clear strategic emphasis on the importance of increasing regional engagement within the Asia-Pacific. This was evidenced through the release of the *2012 Australia in the Asian Century Foreign Policy White Paper* and the *2013 National Security Strategy* which articulated promoting regional engagement as a strategic priority.

⁸⁷ Aust. DoD, “Defence White Paper 2013,” p. 55.

⁸⁸ Aust. DoD, “Defence White Paper 2016,” p. 118.

⁸⁹ Bergin et. al., “Terms of engagement,” p. 11.

By examining a range of embedding activities supported during the Gillard Government's administration, this author found that they generated benefits in three main areas: as a means of enhancing Australia's defence capability without increasing military hardware, by directly leading to increased regional engagement opportunities, and, by enhancing Australia's ability for national influence. These outcomes were particularly prudent noting the fiscal challenges experienced by the Australian government at that time.

Within the paper, the examination of embedding activities was grouped into three case studies, each focusing on different programs and relationships engaged in by the ADF. The first case study, which considered Australia's longstanding relationship with the US, identified several benefits supporting an enhanced defence capability and increased regional engagement. The FPI which was agreed to in November 2011, can be considered as a particularly effective activity used by both Australia and the US as an opportunity to coordinate and maximise the effectiveness of their own respective strategies. Permitting US Marines to embed within ADF bases and facilitating US access to the Asia-Pacific region has for Australia directly led to opportunities for increased regional engagement, as well as provided increased training and exercise opportunities enhancing the ADF's nascent amphibious capability. This was illustrated by the use of combined exercises established under the FPI as showcases to encourage invited observing regional nations to participate in future exercises and training.

Other strategic benefits obtained through supporting the FPI included the perpetuation of the US alliance and associated technology, training and intelligence benefits; it provided an opportunity to maintain interoperability post the drawdown from Afghanistan; created an increased defensive posture which also enhanced northwest Australian resource security; and aided in perpetuating US Asia-Pacific engagement which was considered an essential regional stabilizing force. For Australia and the US, embedding has been an effective method towards maintaining and enhancing their bilateral relationship.

Enhanced opportunity for national influence emerged as a key outcome from the examination of the DCP funded embedding practices

examined within the second and third case studies. The Gillard Government's increased financial support for the DCP despite the coinciding fiscal challenges and overall decrease in defence spending, suggests that the relationship building activities funded by the DCP were considered worthwhile. Within the South Pacific, the ADF engages through the PPBP, which has endured since 1987 and relies on the embedding of RAN advisors and the use of gifted patrol boats. More recently the high degree of trust, mutual understanding and cooperation that the Program has fostered within the bilateral relationships appears to be a crucial enabler for Australia to compete against more financially able competitors for regional influence. Similarly the DCP-funded Australia-based postgraduate study programs offered to foreign defence personnel have been found to be an effective means of establishing relationships with potential future regional leaders, thereby delivering a low-cost means of gaining international influence and leverage. The introduction of alumni associations and visiting fellows programs during the Gillard Government's administration have further ensured that these strategically important linkages are maintained.

In considering the physical process of how the ADF develops and maintains effective regional relationships, activities involving the embedding of defence personnel and equipment have proven a cost effective and enduring method. By enhancing defence capability, enhancing influence and generating opportunities for increased regional engagement, such activities directly supported the Gillard Government's strategic priority of increasing engagement within the Asia-Pacific. Noting that both the 2016 *Defence White Paper* and the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* state a requirement for greater security cooperation with nations in the Indo-Pacific, it is clear that international engagement by the ADF will continue to grow in importance in order to achieve Australian strategic security objectives.

⁹⁰ It may be prudent therefore, for academic discussion to further explore the role military bilateral relationships provide towards supporting national strategy.

⁹⁰ DFAT, "2017 Foreign Policy White Paper," 2017, p. v, www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/; Aust. DoD, "Defence White Paper 2016," p. 34.